

# Bloodthirsty Human Leopards of Africa.---Extraordinary Man Who Is Snake-Proof.

Demoniac Fanatics of the Jungles Who Kill and Sacrifice Their Dearest Relatives with Satanic Atrocities in Blind Obedience to the Cruel Will of a Sorcerer.

A CURIOUS and abnormally blood-thirsty sect of West African aborigines has existed for the last two decades on the island of Sherbro in the Sierra Leone colony. Dr. Oscar Baumann, the celebrated explorer of the dark continent, who next to Dr. Peters has contributed more than any other German-African traveller in shedding the light of civilization on the still numerous unknown regions bordering the Atlantic Ocean, furnishes the current Berlin Illustrated weekly *Fur Alle Welt*, with an interesting description of what are known as the "Human Leopards," who abound back of the Gold Coast.

The explorer asserts that despite the efforts of the British Government to suppress this most fanatical of religious sects these horrid, Satanic atrocities continue as a curse on the earth. From time to time news of their dreadful murders and cannibalism has reached European capitals, but the depiction of the way they mutilated the bodies of their victims, which they subsequently devoured in their cannibalistic feasts appeared so incredible that the European press treated these accounts as untrustworthy exaggerations. The "Human Leopards" were simply regarded as a band of robbers, murderers and cannibals. That they are, however, a thoroughly organized religious sect, who honestly believe that they can appease the wrath of their gods only by demoniacal deeds of the most eccentric cruelty, is a revelation to geographers and the public. On May 7 came a report from the American missionaries at Timpany, Sierra Leone, that the white inhabitants of the district were wrought up to such a pitch of vengeance over a series of outrages, that eleven natives were burned alive in one day on the charge of witchcraft.

As to the origin and superstitious beliefs of this sect, *Fur Alle Welt* says: "Some twenty years ago the village of Talama sent its warriors to overpower and destroy the army of a neighboring enemy. On the way the entire Talama force was surprised by the warriors of the village Imperi and annihilated to a man. Deprived of their defenders the Talamanians sent messengers to a famous sorcerer for counsel as to the best way in which they could revenge themselves on the Imperi inhabitants.

The sorcerer promised his counsel and assistance on condition that they would all join a sect which he would found, and of which they would appoint him as the head and leader. He introduced a fetish, the possession of which was supposed to grant the most ardent desires of the individual and the tribe. Only members of the secret sect would be given possession of this fetish.

The fetish consists of the root of *Kassava* brush and is called *Bafima*. The root is hollowed out clean and filled with vegetable and sticky matter, the composition of which is known only to the sorcerer. The latter ordered that the possessors of the god *Bafima* must pour goat fat over the fetish in order to insure the realization of their fondest wishes.

As soon as the Imperi natives heard of the wonderful *Bafima* they were anxious to join the newly founded secret sect, to the great delight of their enemies, the Talamanians, for the leaders knew very well that the sorcerer had a plan of terrible revenge in store for them. No sooner had the sect worked its way successfully among the Imperi when it was found that the *Bafima* fetish did not always grant the yearnings of its possessors. Whenever the sorcerer was approached by these complaints he commanded that human fat instead of goat fat could alone act as propitiation to their fetish. In order to procure the continued aid of the supernatural power all the members of the sect were

commanded to bring their dearest friend or relative as sacrifice. The sect had already been divided into three parts—the chiefs or kings, the executioners and the lay members. The chiefs and executioners were, of course, selected mostly from the Talamanians.

The name "Human Leopards," say the natives, was suggested to the sorcerer by a real leopard, who had endowed the wise man with the cunning dexterity and strength to execute his plan of revenge. That he had plenty of craftiness was evidenced from the fact that the presents of the applicants for admission into the sect soon made him the richest man among the natives.

Their murderous atrocities are not practised on natives only. Unwary travellers are frequently robbed and killed. Though their vocation is first of all murder, they will not hesitate to steal and rob whenever the opportunity presents itself. The sect has grown to such large proportions that they have become a terror to the natives and settlers, the latter not knowing that their murders mostly were the exponent of their religious duties.

This is the way the sorcerer compelled the bringing of human sacrifice. On an appointed day the one who desired to be or remain a member of the secret sect was to decoy or bring by force if necessary his dearest relative to a certain lonely spot in the woods. When arrived there he himself was to run away and leave the victim to the mercy of the executioners. These are the "Human Leopards," the boldest and strongest men of the secret organization. They are dressed from head to foot in the skin of a leopard, their human features being barely visible. In each hand they hold a three-pronged weapon. With fiendish rapidity the human heasts spring on the form of their helpless and unarmed victim and almost tear him limb from limb. Then they drag the horribly mutilated and still quivering body to the chief for further disposition. As a rule it is cut into small pieces and divided among the villagers who are all cannibals.

It is possible that the examples of relentless punishment which are being tried on the natives may in course of time tend to root out the evil. Many have been brought to Free Town of late and sentenced to death.

This sect is totally different from the leopard-spotted youths of the Umtata tribe of Southern Africa. These do not assume the skin of leopards, nor is their vocation altogether murderous. They are simply separated from their families for a year to harden them for South African warfare. During that time the *Abakwetas*, as they are called, smear white clay over their bodies, rubbing it on in spots to give themselves the appearance of leopards. Long bands of straw are wrapped around their wrists and hands, weighing hundreds of pounds, and as they are sharp edged they inflict terrible tortures during their ceaseless war dances. Their efficiency for the army is measured by the sang froid with which they endure the tortures of the dances during the year of probation.

## SUNDAY DYSPEPSIA.

A High Medical Authority Explains Its Causes and Character.

The average man of fairly good digestion will, on reflection, find that he suffers habitually from dyspepsia, more or less severe. It is a very unpleasant fact that the "old day" which a workman has to himself should be marred in this way.

There is one remedy. That is to take one's meals at the same hours on Sunday as on other days, and to have them of a similar character.

Sunday dyspepsia is a recognized ailment among physicians. The Medical Record explains its causes. It points out that in our progress from barbarism we have evolved a people with whom regularity in eating is absolutely necessary to good health. As a result of this artificial existence, the secretions are poured out and ready for action

with the monotony of clockwork. If this custom is neglected, the violator not only suffers bodily discomfort, but an actual injury is done to the digestive apparatus, which has been so educated that it requires a definite amount of exercise and positive promptness in feeding that requirement.

The stomach having poured out its secretions, as customary, waits only a short time before allowing them to be absorbed without the accompanying nutrition which goes to the formation of more secretions. After a few such experiments, the secretions become less in amount and activity, and indigestion ensues.

Dyspeptics are ordered to eat at inflexible regular intervals. Normal stomachs are by no means many, yet this rule, so imperative to sufferers, is regularly disregarded by the well. Once a week the three regular meals are replaced by late rising and abstinence, followed by gluttony. The gastric juices know nothing of a seventh day of "rest," and the result is discomfort, stupidity and loss of appetite on Monday.

## SHOOTING FLYING FISH.

Lively Sport with the Gun Dropping the Finny Flyers Off the Pacific Coast.

Out under the influence of the glorious climate of California, where vegetation is abnormal and man and nature seem to live under high pressure, even the sportsman seeks his pleasure on unique lines, and now the expert shots of the Pacific coast, having tired of the conventional recreation of shooting quail and pheasants on the leas, set sail upon the ocean, and with their repeating shotguns slaughter the flying fish.

The favorite field for this novel recreation is the water of Santa Catalina Island, off the coast of Southern California. The sportsmen prefer the steam and electric launches that may be obtained at Long Beach or San Pedro in the chase, for reasons that will appear. The so-called flying fish of the Pacific does not differ from those found in the waters of the Mexican Gulf and the Caribbean, except that like everything else in California he is larger than his Eastern cousin, and attains a length of eighteen inches and a weight of two pounds.

Alarmed by the boat or steamer, these glistening creatures of the deep leap out of the water by a vigorous movement of the screw-like tail and dash away in headlong flight, skimming over its water like birds. To the tourist who witnesses the sight for the first time, they are readily mistaken for birds.

The flying fish does not actually fly, but it has four wing-like fins which it uses to support itself in the air. Hurling itself out of the sea by the aid of its tail, and using these fins as parachutes or aeroplanes, it goes soaring away, sometimes covering a distance of an eighth of a mile.

When the fish has described the long parabola and again strikes the water it at once begins another violent twisting of the tail and again leaps into the air. The fins are not flapped, the only motion being a tremulous one imparted to them when the tail is twisted in the water.

As the boat glides along the fish dart from the water and go soaring away on either side, and it is then that the sportsman sitting in the bow of the launch has his opportunity. They rise, to be sure, not

many feet from the surface, but are far from easy targets. Sometimes a dozen of them are in the air at a time, and a good shot can bring down a double by shooting to the right and left.

Wherever the flying fish is to be found there will appear the tuna, a fierce creature known on the Atlantic seaboard as the horse mackerel. The flying fish is the legitimate prey of the tuna, and big schools of tunas come sweeping in from the deep, driving the flying fish before them, chasing them into the air six, eight and ten feet, the tunas themselves giving marvellous exhibitions of tumbling.

At such times the flying fish are crazed with terror, and leave the water by scores and hundreds. Then the sportsman's gun is kept cracking merrily.



FROM A PICTURE IN *Fur Alle Welt*.

## THE HUMAN LEOPARD POUNCING UPON HIS PREY.

"He is dressed from head to foot in the skin of a leopard, holding in each hand a three-pronged weapon, and then he springs upon his victim and almost tears him limb from limb."

FROM A DRAWING IN THE BERLIN ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY, *FUR ALLE WELT*.

Silas Sugg Toys with All the Most Venomous Serpents, Lets Them Bite Him, and Doesn't Fear Them Because He Is Impervious to Their Poison.

His name is Silas Sugg, and he looks 17. He is neither pretty nor has he great wisdom, but he can cut loose an off-hand sermon that will take the bark off, and he can handle venomous snakes as no other man on earth can do it.

He doesn't care what sort of a snake it is—copperhead, cottonmouth, moccasin, sand rattler or side winder—he will pick him up as if poisonous snakes were as mythical as unicorns.

He is a homely old farmer who knows the trade of silversmith and has got religion.

His immunity from death by snake bite, he says, is the miracle-token of the omniscience of his mission from the Almighty.

When Silas Sugg plunges his bare arm into a writhing, wriggling, hissing mass of rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths, moccasins and puffing adders and draws them out again with a copperhead hanging by his fangs to his thumb, a cottonmouth with his fangs so deeply fixed in Sugg's wrist where the veins are largest and bluest that the blood comes, and the broken-off poison teeth of a rattler still in his flesh, the ordinary man or woman begins to believe in miracles and Silas Sugg.

Of course all the smart people will tell you that the poison glands have been removed from Silas Sugg's reptiles and that they are harmless therefore as other snakes. For doubters of this sort Silas performs some experiments. He disengages whatever snake happens to be biting him at the time and lets it bite a cat or dog or fowl. The snakes that do Sugg no harm invariably kill the animals they strike. The other afternoon, in the midst of an exhortation to the ungodly to come in and be saved, Silas Sugg snatched a rooster from a near by fence and held it up before one of his copperheads. It took just seventeen minutes for the poor cock to die.

Silas Sugg is forty-eight years old. He has had no education and neither of his parents could either read or write. He was a failure as a farmer and has made his living for sixteen years as a silversmith. The religious phase of his character developed about five years ago, when he evolved a sort of theology from the Bible, in which Christianity and snakes seem to be about equal parts. According to him Christ's mission on earth, besides being to save the lost and restore peace among the sons of Adam, was to repeal that law which ordained enmity between mankind and the snake, whose persuasions brought about the fall.

Sugg is very careful about his serpents. They can bite him as much as they will, but he handles them as carefully as though they were glass and he was afraid of breaking them. In the autumn he turns them loose among the rocks of Illinois, and he says they always come back in the Spring.

In his deal box he carries a rattlesnake, which appears to be a fine four-foot specimen of *Crotalus confluens*; three or four copperheads of various sizes, which are readily recognizable as *Anelastodon constrictor*; a five-foot cottonmouth, otherwise

known as the highland moccasin and to ophiologists as *Anelastodon atrocus*, and equally dreaded under either name; several water moccasins, *Anelastodon piscivorus*, the bite of every one of which is ordinarily considered fatal. Ophiologists say that the puffing adder, or ill-tempered, bad-mannered *Heterodon platyrhinus*, is harmless. Sugg has one in his box. He says that cats and chickens die when bitten by the puffing adder, but the puffing adder doesn't hurt him.

All of these snakes are allowed to strike Sugg at every performance he gives. They are performances, though he permits no admission fee and refuses to travel with any circus, side show or dime museum. He really seems to be just a big, awkward, stunted man with a good rough eloquence and a sincere belief in his mission to preach. Of course, he neither drinks nor smokes and has all the minor virtues that make up the backwoods church member.

WM. B. MORRIS, Attorney At Law, June 14, Golconda, Ill.

## WONDERFUL VENEZUELA.

One Fish That Eats Human Beings and Another with Molar Teeth.

Venezuela is a land of wonders, about which we are only just beginning to learn. Mr. S. A. Thompson, who has just returned to St. Paul after a voyage of exploration up the mighty Orinoco, fully confirms this statement.

While exploring Imataca Mountain he found a mighty cascade. It followed the precipitous sides of the mountain, which rose at an angle of about 85 degrees. Thompson says the cascade looked like a great sheet of animated white lace with intricately woven meshes. After standing spellbound the party advanced to explore the cascade. They climbed up the side to a height of 600 feet, but still the waterfall towered an equal distance above them. Mr. Thompson believes the water falls a distance of 1,100 or 1,200 feet.

The cascade was named the waterfall of Manon, after the mythical city of gold for which Raleigh and other explorers so vainly searched.

The party several times came in contact with the caña fish, which is the most ferocious inhabitant of rivers known. The caribs are not over fourteen inches long, but they travel in schools. Their teeth are three-cornered. Any living object which attracts their attention is attacked with fury. Mr. Thompson tells of an Indian woman who entered the water to fill a bucket. She was attacked by the fish and reached shore only to die in fifteen minutes. The flesh was literally torn from her body. The fish frequently have been known to bite ordinary fish looks in two.

Another fish which the party often came across was the morocoto, the flavor of which is like Lake Superior whitefish, only more delicate. The morocoto is provided with molar teeth, and subsists on vegetable matter, which it thoroughly masticates before swallowing.

## Lawyer Morris, of Golconda, Vouches for Sugg.

WM. B. MORRIS, ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR AT LAW, GOLCONDA, ILL.

New York Journal:

This is no fake and no lie. I saw it and much more than I

I have written. I believe that there is a rational explanation

for the old man's performances and powers that could be most

interestingly developed by scientists. You may use article and his

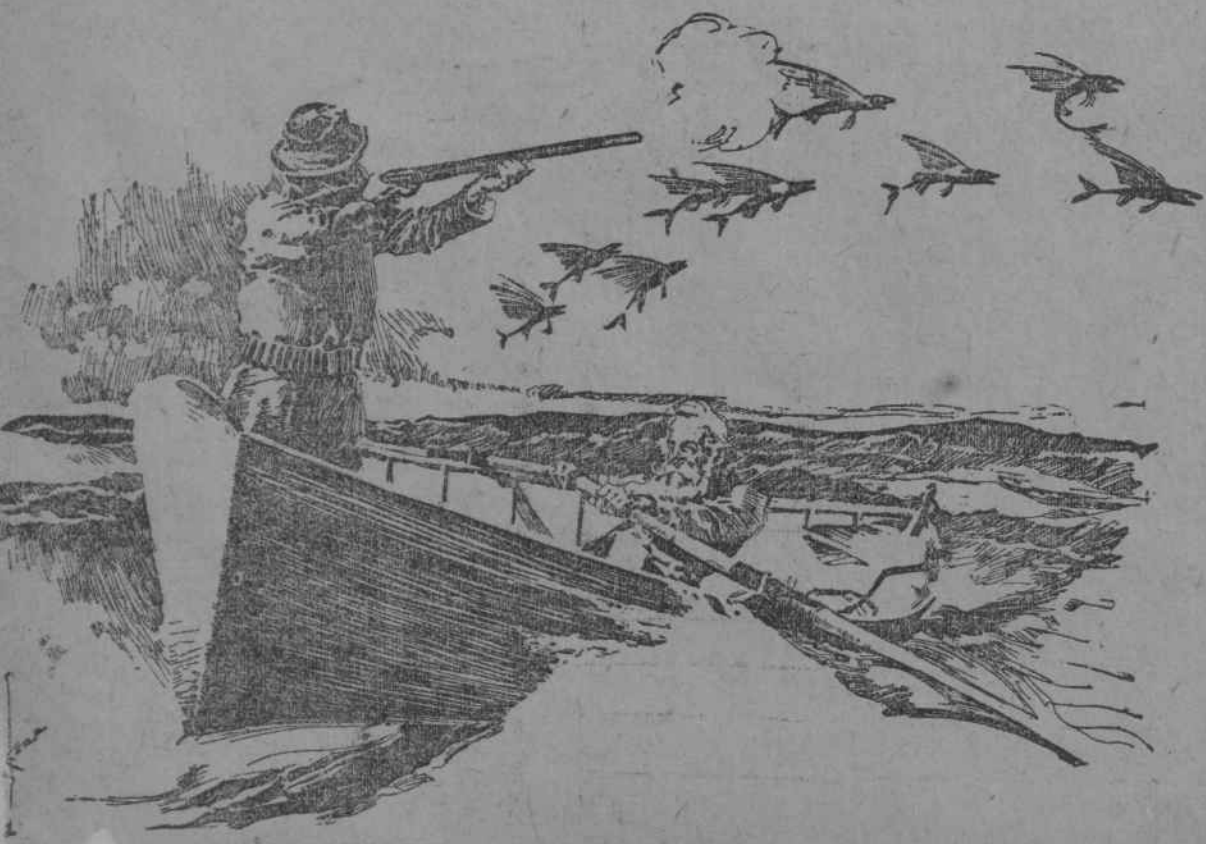
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Yours, Wm B Morris.



## THE WIZARD OF THE SNAKES.

The artful Mr. Sugg knows more about the mystic of wriggling varmints than any man in America, and he understands how to handle them with impunity.



## SHOOTING AT THE FLYING FISH OF THE PACIFIC COAST.

Seen in boats, and as the schools of fish rise and fly through the air by means of their bird-like wings, they offer a fine target for the man who is a quick and unerring shot.